

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes, October 12, 2017
Parker Annex Archaeology Center
Columbia, South Carolina

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Mike Hutchins, Titus Duren, Bobby Garmany, Stan Halliday, Stephen Thomas, Martha Herbert, Jonathan Rabon

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Vice Chair Cleve Smith, Sam Hiott

STAFF PRESENT:

Emily Cope, Ken Prosser, Shelley Ivester, Susan Johnson, Dan Rankin, Jay Cantrell, Jay Butfiloski, Charles Ruth, Derrell Shipes, Michael Hook, Billy Dukes, Sam Chapplelear, Chris Page, Sean Taylor, Meg Gaillard

OTHERS PRESENT:

Paul Taylor, Matt Johnson, Mike Hardee

Chair Hutchins opened the meeting and Emily Cope introduced Sean Taylor and Meg Gaillard, DNR's Archaeologists. Mrs. Cope thanked them for hosting the meeting at the new Parker Annex Archaeology Center.

The minutes of the February 9, 2017 meeting were approved as submitted.

CONSTITUENT COMMENTS

Constituents Matt Johnson and Mike Hardee, representing the Horry-Georgetown Sportsman's Coalition, (HGSC) attended the meeting to express concerns regarding Samworth WMA in Georgetown County. Mr. Hardee read a statement prepared by the Coalition addressing their concerns, which is marked as Exhibit A and attached to the original minutes. Their statement will be posted to DNR's website as part of the minutes when reviewed/approved by the Advisory Committee at their next meeting.

Chair Hutchins asked Mr. Johnson to elaborate on being treated rudely by DNR staff (as mentioned in their statement). Mr. Johnson stated that at the last meeting he and Mr. Hardee attended, Mr. Dean Harrigal came to him personally after the meeting and was very rude. Chair Hutchins stated he had no knowledge of Mr. Johnson being treated rudely. Mr. Johnson stated Sam Chapplelear, Billy Dukes and Derrell Shipes had to stand between himself and Mr. Harrigal. Mr. Johnson further stated he spoke to Mr. Harrigal and he did not hold his tongue.

Chair Hutchins stated he wanted to clarify that Mr. Johnson was not treated rudely by DNR staff in a public meeting.

Emily Cope stated she would like for Committee Members to know that DNR staff has gone above and beyond for the HGSC by communicating with them, to include monthly reports reflecting activities on all three properties within the Upper Coastal Waterfowl Project. Staff meets personally with these representatives quarterly. Mrs. Cope further stated she also receives numerous text messages and

emails from them in those time frames. She further replied that DNR staff is not blowing off the HGSC. Staff is responding to their communications and requests and they are sent copies of monthly reports.

A discussion regarding concerns mentioned in the statement followed. Mrs. Cope reported staff will be happy to take Advisory Committee Members and Messrs. Hardee and Johnson via boat to observe work being done on these properties.

Chair Hutchins thanked Messrs. Hardee and Johnson for attending the meeting to voice their concerns. Chair Hutchins stated he will personally speak to Director Alvin Taylor about their concerns and will get back with them.

UPDATE ON COYOTE HARVEST INCENTIVE PROGRAM:

Furbearer Project Leader Jay Butfiloski reported the Coyote Harvest Incentive Program was established with a 2016 Legislative budget proviso, directing DNR to tag and release four coyotes per game zone (16 total), and anyone taking a tagged coyote would be rewarded a free lifetime hunting license. The person reporting the tagged coyote has the option to designate anyone for the lifetime license such as a child, relative, or friend. An extra incentive was offered by the Department to those interested persons that preregistered for DNR's Coyote Harvest Incentive Program. However, a person did not have to register to receive the lifetime hunting license reward as stated in the budget proviso. This simple registration program allowed the gathering of just over 2,000 interested persons so they could be surveyed later about their coyote hunting activities related to the Coyote Harvest Incentive Program.

Mr. Butfiloski stated to date, seven of the sixteen tagged coyotes have been killed and reported to DNR. Four were taken during the deer season last year, two by trappers during the trapping season, and one by a NC coyote hunter. The coyote shot by the NC coyote hunter had traveled over 65 miles from its release site (straight line distance). A total of seven of the sixteen tagged coyotes were released prior to the end of deer season, and four of those were killed before that season ended on January 1. So far, tagged coyotes have been taken from every game zone but Game Zone 1. The budget proviso remains in the 2017 appropriations bill, and plans are to tag and release another sixteen coyotes during the 2018 Fiscal Year.

Mr. Butfiloski further reported a survey was developed and sent out last month to all 2,055 persons that preregistered for the DNR Coyote Harvest Incentive Program. A total of 1,180 responses were received over a two-week period. Seventy-five of the respondents reported going coyote hunting after registering for the program. The respondents reported taking 864 coyotes and hunting 4,043 days since registering. A total of 65% of the respondents reported shooting a coyote while hunting another species sometime in the past. Of this 65%, a total of 93% reported taking a coyote during any previous deer season. Of those people, 50% reported taking a coyote during the 2016 deer season. Fifty-percent of the respondents reported that they increased their efforts or desire to hunt coyotes, while 37% disagreed. Overall, 57% were satisfied with the program and only 10% were dissatisfied.

PROBLEMATIC VEGETATION AT LAKE MURRAY:

~~Chris Page, DNR's Aquatic Nuisance Species Program Manager reported DNR staff has continued maintenance stocking of Triploid grass carp in Lakes Murray and Greenwood for Hydrilla control. Mr. Page stated the flooding in 2015 and 2016 forced both lakes to open their emergency spillways thereby allowing the carp to exit the lakes. Staff was unable to get an accurate number of carp that were lost. They originally estimated a 50% loss. Based on vegetation regrowth after a couple of years, staff realized that number was too low. Staff's plan is to have 1 Triploid carp for every 6 surface acres in~~

those lakes. Based on the fact that Lake Greenwood now has 100+ acres of Hydrilla, staff increased the number for Lake Greenwood to get to the level of a control stocking for that 100 acres. Mr. Page stated this fall staff is stocking 3,000 Triploid carp into Lake Murray and 2,000 into Lake Greenwood, based on models used over the past 18 years which were developed by experts in the field.

Chris Page, DNR's aquatic nuisance species program manager, reported DNR staff has continued maintenance stocking of triploid grass carp in Lakes Murray and Greenwood. He stated the flooding in 2015 and 2016 forced both lakes to open their emergency spillways thereby allowing the carp to exit the lakes. Staff was unable to get an accurate number of carp that were lost, but estimated it at 50 percent. After examining vegetation regrowth the last couple years, staff realized that number was too low. Their plan is to have 1 triploid carp for every 6 surface acres in the lakes. Based on the fact that Lake Greenwood now has more than 100 acres of hydrilla, staff has increased the number of fish there. Mr. Page stated this fall staff is stocking 3,000 triploid carp into Lake Murray and 2,000 into Lake Greenwood, following models used over the past 18 years. Constituent Paul Taylor stated as a water fowler, fisherman and outdoorsman, he is against stocking grass carp in Lake Murray. Mr. Page replied DNR's goal is to figure out a way to balance the needs of everyone involved with the lake system, including hunters, boaters, fishermen, and property owners.

Constituent Paul Taylor stated as a water fowler, fisherman and outdoorsman, he is against the stocking of grass carp in Lake Murray. Mr. Page replied DNR's goal is to figure out a way to balance the needs of everyone involved with the lake system i.e., hunters, boaters, fishermen, and property owners. The difficulty lies in reaching that balance, but before that balance is reached, stocking is required (which is not a perfect science). Mr. Page reiterated the goal is to stock just enough carp to ensure Hydrilla does not return, and he feels that is possible.

Mr. Page stated the Aquatic Plant Management Council meets in November and the Council will discuss vegetation on Lake Murray.

Chair Hutchins stated he thinks staff is doing a fantastic job with controlling nuisance vegetation and knows it is a balancing act.

Committee Member Thomas stated the number one complaint in the state for public duck hunters is pressure. To address pressure, opportunities need to be opened. Duck hunters that now hunt the coast, once hunted Lakes Marion and Moultrie and probably a few hunted Lake Murray. Mr. Thomas feels restoring those lakes to their condition prior to Hydrilla issues will free things up for public hunters.

BEAR SEASON CHANGES:

Big Game Project Leader Charles Ruth distributed a hand-out (copy attached to the original minutes). Mr. Ruth reported South Carolina has two black bear populations, one in the mountains (Game Zone 1) which historically has been open to hunting, and one in the coastal plain centered in Georgetown and Horry Counties which, historically, has not been hunted.

Mr. Ruth announced in 2017 H. 3601 was filed related to bear hunting outside Game Zone 1, giving staff the opportunity to work with key legislators to make needed changes. This bill passed, resulting in the following: (1) no requirement for hunters to apply and be "drawn" for a tag, i.e., any hunter may purchase a bear tag and hunt like it has historically been in Game Zone 1; (2) DNR maintained authority to set season dates; (3) DNR was given authority to set a quota on the number of bears that can be taken during the season to guard against overharvest; and (4) DNR was given the authority to close the

season prior to the scheduled date if the harvest quota is met. This would be accomplished through a season closure notice.

Mr. Ruth stated this legislation did not affect bear hunting in Game Zone 1 but provides the same authority for SCDNR to regulate bear hunting in all other game zones.

The 2017 bear hunting season in Game Zone 4 only includes Georgetown, Horry, Marion and Williamsburg Counties. The season dates are October 17-30, for still hunting only with a statewide limit of 1 bear, with a harvest quota of 30 bears. If quota is met prior to October 30, the season will close 24 hours after season closure notice.

Mr. Ruth reported hunters are responsible for monitoring the season status and harvested bears must be reported by midnight of the day of the harvest.

HARTWELL RESERVOIR HABITAT ENHANCEMENT PROJECT:

Dan Rankin, Region 1 Fisheries Coordinator, gave an overview of the history of the PCB Contamination in Twelvemile Creek and Lake Hartwell, and actions recently taken to mitigate impacts to ecological and recreational services. Mr. Rankin also gave a detailed update of the Hartwell Fish Habitat Enhancement Project. He reported this is a 2.8 million dollar 10-year project funded by the PCB settlement reached between the SC Natural Resource Trustee Group and Schlumberger Technology, Inc. This Recreational Services project is one major project being completed under the Trustee's Resource Compensation Determination Plan settlement for PCB contamination in Twelvemile Creek and Lake Hartwell.

Mr. Rankin reported on habitat enhancement equipment and techniques being used to enhance fish habitat in Lake Hartwell. Four fish habitat enhancement coves or sites have already been completed, with six additional sites nearing completion. Also, two sites on the Tugalo River arm have been planned and permitted through the Army Corps permitting group. An additional 10 sites are being planned. Some popular enhancement projects/structures include: deep-water rock jetties, Mossback artificial fish attractors (47), Rootwads/stumps (1,200) weighted down by concrete box culverts (58), Pea gravel spawning beds (5), Spider humps (8), Cut-and-cabled trees (1,615), and submersed aquatic vegetation plantings (1,200).

Mr. Rankin stated with recreational service enhancement projects such as intensive habitat enhancement and Green Pond Event Area (high capacity tournament facility), Lake Hartwell has emerged as a destination lake for large, high profile fishing tournaments such as the Bassmaster Classic, FLW and Striped Bass Challenge.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS:

Mr. Halliday stated he senses the frustration of the constituents from the HGSC. He thinks part of the communication issue is what can realistically be done. While he has not been on that property, he has had the good fortune to hunt 3,000 acres of rice fields for 20 years.

Mr. Duren inquired about the new deer tagging system as he has received questions from constituents in his area.

Ms. Herbert has been asked why the new doe tags issued are date specific. Mr. Ruth reviewed the deer tagging changes that recently became effective. Ms. Herbert also thanked constituents from the HGSC for their attendance and concerns which will hopefully lead to solutions.

Mr. Thomas suggested an update from Dr. Rick Kaminski at the Committee's next meeting. Dr. Kaminski is the Director of Clemson University's James C Kennedy Waterfowl and Wetlands Conservation Center. Mr. Thomas would also like a summary of the draw hunts as an agenda item for the next meeting as well.

Chair Hutchins announced this is the last meeting for Susan Johnson and Derrell Shipes as they are retiring. He thanked them for their service and stated they would be missed. Emily Cope commended Derrell and Susan for their work on the Committee over their careers and announced Chair Hutchins was providing lunch following the meeting in recognition and appreciation of their service. Mrs. Cope also introduced Shelley Ivester as Dot Walker's replacement and commended Shelley on taking on that role and providing excellent customer service. Ms. Ivester was asked to observe Ms. Johnson's duties related to Advisory Committee meetings. Chair Hutchins stated it is good to have Ms. Ivester on board.

There was no old or new business.

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING:

February 22, 2018. Location to be announced. Mrs. Cope stated she will arrange a tour of Samworth prior to the next Committee meeting.